

WATER/WASTEWATER FACILITIES COMMISSION COMMISSION MINUTES

June 11, 2014

A meeting of the City of Fitchburg Water / Wastewater Commission was held on June 11, 2014 at the JA Provincial Building, 1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg, MA.

The meeting commenced at 4:30 p.m.

Members present: Lenny Laakso, Commissioner DPW
 Rick Healey
 George Siener
 Michael McLaughlin
 Ron Lubianez
 Carol Brown

Members Absent:

Others present: Denis Meunier, Deputy Commissioner Water
 Joseph Jordan, Deputy Commissioner W.W.
 Jeff Murawski, DPW Civil Engineer
 Janet Morrison, North County Land Trust
 Mary Jane Franklin

ITEM # 1: Approval of last meetings minutes:

The minutes for the May 7, 2014 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

ITEM # 2: Public Forum:

No forum comments were received.

ITEM # 3: FY14 / FY15 Budget Review:

Mr. Meunier addressed a recent newspaper article regarding FY14 budget transfers related to heating, postage and mailing costs. A City Councilor was upset that this request was not made before January. Mr. Meunier explained the heating/cooling system requires 50 – 100 gallons of oil 365 days a year and it cannot be turned off, even in summer as it is tied into the cooling and dehumidifying process. The postage and mailing included all expenses (paper, stuffing envelopes, toner, etc.) associated with monthly billing and this line item was underfunded. He explained he transferred funds from the Capitol budget to cover these costs. Moving forward he will make any needed requests before January.

ITEM # 4: Watershed Land Acquisition Update:

Mr. Meunier and Janet Morrison of North County Land Trust updated The Commission on the Kirby and Zins purchases.

The Fitchburg Division of Water accepted a conservation restriction from North County Land Trust on the Zins property, which is 7 acres of land. The closing was held last week and is filed in the Registry of Deeds.

There were some issues with the Kirby property. Part of the process for accepting the watershed grant is to notify DEP and all of the abutters about the land that is being acquired and to hold a public hearing.

Mr. Meunier explained DEP was not satisfied with the provided information describing the property. They required a complete surveyed plan of land before they would sign off on the grant, which would cost approximately \$30,000. After negotiations by Janet Morrison and Celia Riechel of EOEEA, DEP agreed to accept Assessors plans from Ashby and Ashburnham along with the description of the property previously provided. The public hearing has been rescheduled for tomorrow. Mr. Meunier is not anticipating any issues as DEP has been given all the documentation via e-mail for review. Per the instructions of the grant program this must close before the end of the month.

Mr. Meunier discussed a new Watershed Land Grant application for a parcel of land known as the Krashes property owned by David Krashes. He reminded The Commission that this is the same type of Grant that was applied for and granted for the Kirby Property. The Water Department has been interested in acquiring this property since 2002 as a tributary to the Bickford Reservoir runs through the property. Mr. Meunier explained that he is waiting for a final appraised value which is expected to be \$320,000. The final cost to The City for the conservation restriction of 32 acres of land will be approximately \$5,000.

There is an escrowed account within the Enterprise Fund with over \$400,000 that was acquired when the conservation restriction for the northern watershed was sold to Mass Fish and Wildlife. These funds will be used to pay for the land upfront and the grant programs will reimburse the Enterprise Fund. The net cost for the Kirby property will be approximately \$64,000 which will leave \$339,000. If necessary, and with The Commission's and City Council's approval, money will be transferred from retained earnings temporarily to cover the initial cost of \$375,000 until the money is reimbursed by the grants. The closing is expected to be in approximately a year.

A motion to approve the application for the grant and the purchase of a conservation restriction on this land contingent on receiving the grant and other donations that meet the criteria that are on this budget was made by Dr. Lubianez and seconded by Ms. Brown. It was approved by unanimous vote.

ITEM # 5: Approve proceeding with \$25M Loan Order for East Plant upgrades:

Mr. Jordan reported that \$23M, which covers the cost of the related consent decree work, has been approved by the Finance Committee. He explained the additional \$2M had been earmarked for roof repairs and building upgrades, primarily the creation of new office space at the East Plant. He explained that anaerobic digestion at the West Plant will be moving forward and he would like to move all Wastewater staff to the East Plant. The Council requested that a budgetary consultant be hired to help determine what the amount of these projects should be.

A motion to proceed with the \$23M loan with order from Council for the purpose of completing the final phase of the secondary systems upgrades at the East Plant was made by Mr. McLaughlin and seconded by Mr. Laakso. It was approved by unanimous vote.

ITEM # 6: Consideration of revisions to Paper Mill billing methods:

Mr. Jordan discussed the possibility of revising the methods of billing the Paper Mills. When the flows were redirected to the east plant he explained the agreement with the Mills was that the billing methods would remain the same. Mr. Jordan has since realized that there are many unforeseen costs with this method, specifically flows dealing with I and I. With the current billing method the Mills only pay for the amount of flow that they pump with no costs associated with I and I. Mr. Jordan stated that it costs Wastewater \$.02/gallon to treat wastewater at the Plant and the Mills are paying either equal or slightly under this amount. He is recommending that the Mills be charged a flat rate of \$.02/gallon based on their flow per month.

Mr. Jordan informed the commission Crocker Paper is in negotiations with FiberMark to buy the mill. He believes that FiberMark should be required to pay past due funds from 2001 in the amount of \$557,000

before being allowed to discharge any flow. Because of contractual agreements this past due amount cannot be liend.

ITEM # 10: Rescinding of West Plant NPDES permit:

Mr. Jordan explained EPA would like a decision on the West Plant permit. No discharge has occurred since May 2010 and the permit officially expired in 2005. It appears that the installation of anaerobic digestion is feasible at the West Plant and, should this occur, Mr. Jordan believes it would be best to direct any wastewater flows to the East Plant. He is recommending that the City discontinue this permit. He has a meeting with EPA to discuss the permit along with transferring the permitted loading from the West Plant to the East plant. The East Plant permit expires next year and Mr. Jordan is hoping for some relaxation on some of the limits as this could help in improving compliance records and eliminating the need for a new phosphorous plant.

ITEM # 11: Other Business:

Discussion on Deputy Commissioner WW position:

Mr. Healey, on behalf of the Commission, wished Mr. Jordan good luck and thanked him for his many years of service.

Mr. Laakso introduced Jeff Murawski to the Commission as his choice to fill the Deputy Commissioner for Wastewater position. Mr. Laakso reviewed Mr. Murawski's resume and qualifications for the position. Commission members questioned Mr. Murawski regarding his previous and current work experience.

After some discussion regarding the hiring process, The Commission voted to go into executive session to deliberate on Commissioner Laakso's recommendation and appropriate compensation for the position and to immediately adjourn at the conclusion of the executive session.

The Commission voted, in executive session, to recommend to the Mayor that Mr. Murawski be appointed to the position of Deputy Commissioner for Wastewater.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 9, 2014 at 4:30 pm at the JA Provincial Building, 1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg, MA.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM

Minutes Prepared by _____
Mary Jane Franklin